NAQCC News

July 12, 2008	NAQCC Web Site	Issue #074

In this issue:

1. July Sprint
2. June Challenges Results
3. Operating Tips
4. General Club News
5. CW Cartoon of the Month
6. Member News

1. SPRINT: Our sprint is this Wednesday evening, July 16th at 8:30-10:30 PM EDT (Thursday 0030-0230Z).

This month our special award is for participating and submitting a log for the first time ever. The SA will be awarded by drawing among the top qualifiers from each of our sprint divisions.

There are also the other usual prizes and certificates topped off by our monthly giveaway of a CW book on CD donated by Chuck K7QO. Chuck is currently giving away one CD to the high scorer who hasn't won a CD before. As with the special award, the CD is awarded in a drawing among the top qualifiers from each of our sprint divisions. There is now a list of all the current CD's available in the General Sprint Rules. Club officers are not eligible for the CD's.

Our autologger has speeded up reporting of results so much we will be changing our log submission deadline starting with the August sprint. The deadline will then be 2400Z on the Sunday following the sprint.

If you're entering one of our sprints for the first time, we welcome you and hope you will be a regular participant from now on.

Remember this is only a brief overview of the coming sprint. Be sure to always read and understand the full general sprint rules and any specific rules for the current month's sprint.

Complete sprint results and rules always can be found here.

2. JUNE CHALLENGES RESULTS: We had our usual two challenges in June. Our annual FD challenge, and since we always have a full month long challenge each month, we also had a worked members challenge. Let's look at both and see how they turned out.

Participation in our FD challenge was down a bit this year for whatever reason and our usual portable winner N4UW didn't send in a report. From the few reports we did get, here are the winners:

Portable division: KD2MX with 18 states worked, followed by WY7N with 8, W2JEK 4, KC2EGL 1.

Home division: K3WWP with 37 states worked, followed by VE3HUR with 1.

Our month long worked members challenge certificate was won by K3WWP with 43 points from working 26 members, followed by NU7T with 30/17, K1YAN 25/14, N8XMS 20/12, KC2EGL 20/11, W2JEK 14/7, and N1LU 10/5.

All eligible entrants went into a drawing for the paddle/bug handles donated by Gregg WB8LZG. Gregg drew K1YAN as the winner.

You can see examples of the handles on Gregg's web site.

Full challenge info including my tutorial/work sheet for our alphabet style challenges here.

3. OPERATING TIPS: We had a good response to the first installment of our OPERATING TIPS section in the last newsletter There is quite an interest in learning proper CW operation as many folks discover Morse Code for the first time or return to it after many years. We hope our Elmer program will soon be in effect with Ron K5DUZ and Karl N3IJR dispersing their expertise in a special section of the club web site.

In the meantime our feedback from the last OPERATING TIPS section included good suggestions for two topics this month. Bill KE5KWE asks, "Where does a new CW Operator go (frequency wise) to try for his first QSO?" Bill also asks along with Ed KF4KRV how to go about zero beating a signal.

With the demise of the Novice license and pretty much the demise of the Novice segments on the bands, in effect there is really no longer any designated area on the bands for the newcomers to Morse Code to operate. Perhaps when Ron and Karl get our Elmer project up and running, they will suggest some such area. Meanwhile, in listening to the bands I find slow speed operation (suggesting newcomers) spread out pretty much all over the CW segments of the bands with the possible exception of the Extra class segments (the lower 25 kHz of each band). There is perhaps somewhat of a concentration of activity around the QRP and FISTS frequencies, and generally most QRPers and most FISTS members will be kind enough to QRS for someone if they are asked to do so. My suggestion would be to either find someone calling CQ anywhere at a speed you can copy and call them - or call a slow CQ of your own around the QRP or FISTS frequencies. Check my (K3WWP) web site for the QRP frequencies and the FISTS web site for the FISTS frequencies. There are exceptions, but a rough rule of thumb is that the QRP frequencies are at .060 in each band (3.560, 14.060, etc.) and the FISTS frequencies are at .058 (7.058, 21.058, etc.)

As for zero beating, first a little on the origin of the term. Before all these new-fangled rigs with all the bells and whistles to make operating easier, most hams used a separate receiver and transmitter. As you know, a CW signal cannot be heard unless it is mixed with another signal to change it to an audio frequency. Just listen to some CW with your receiver in its AM mode to see (hear) what I mean. You will hear some clicks and hissing perhaps, but no clear audio

tone. So each receiver had a BFO or beat frequency oscillator to mix with the CW signal to produce an audible tone. If the BFO was 500 Hz higher or lower than the CW signal you heard the CW as a 500 Hz tone. Now comes the zero beat part. When zero beating a signal, you turned off the receiver's BFO, and turned on your transmitter VFO. You then tuned your VFO closer and closer to the CW signal you wanted to zero beat. The audio frequency got lower and lower until it became not 500, not 400, not 100, not 50, but zero Hz. Then your VFO was set to the same exact frequency as the CW signal, hence the term zero beat (frequency).

Interesting perhaps, especially to new hams who've never used anything but a transceiver. However it doesn't address the question of how to zero beat with these 'new-fangled' rigs. Actually there are different ways with different rigs, and if your rig doesn't work as I'm going to describe, I'd suggest contacting the rig manufacturer and asking them the best way to zero beat with their particular rig.

The major transceivers all work this way. When the tone of the signal being listened to matches the tone of the sidetone signal used for monitoring your own keying, you are zero beat with the CW signal you are listening to. So just tune in the CW signal till the tone sounds the same as what you hear when you monitor your sending, and you've got it made. Now if you have perfect pitch, you should be able to get within a very few Hz of perfect zero beat. If you're like most folks who don't have perfect pitch, you can get within probably 100 Hz or so, and that's generally sufficient. However if you are tone deaf, then this method will probably not work very well for you. I fall in the middle category, being neither tone deaf nor having perfect pitch. The K2 makes this process easier by providing a button that activates a feature allowing you to hear both your sidetone frequency and the received signal at the same time. A neat little innovation from Elecraft that Mike KC2EGL showed me when he had his K2 here.

Many other transceiver designers have automated this zero beating procedure by letting the transceiver circuitry detect when a CW signal is tuned to produce the same tone as the sidetone monitor. You just push a button and the transceiver tunes the signal to zero beat. However, I've found that this doesn't always work all that well if you don't have a narrow CW filter in the rig or if the CW signal is not strong enough, but it will work in many cases if your rig has that feature.

There is also a neat external circuit that can be homebrewed to do the same thing. Look in the CW section of my (K3WWP) web site for a diagram and info on the unit.

Unfortunately, I don't have access to all the rigs here to describe any pecularities in zero beating they may have. Maybe when Ron and Karl get the Elmer project going, those pecularities can be addressed via input from you, our members.

More tips can be found on the web site here.

4. GENERAL CLUB NEWS: - You know, if each one of our club members would recruit one new member by the end of 2008, we'd have a membership of around 5,000! Wouldn't that make a super strong pro-CW statement to the ham radio fraternity!

Remember all one must do to qualify for membership is to operate CW and QRP SOMETIME or just support the idea of CW/QRP operation if they currently don't have a setup to operate CW/QRP. It is not necessary to be a full-time 100% dedicated CW/QRP operator by any means. Perhaps someone only operates CW/QRP in certain contests or occasionally experiments with CW/QRP. They are every bit as welcome to become a member as a 100% dedicated CW/QRP op like K3WWP.

All our club activities must be done with CW at QRP levels, and we will never change that because we respect other clubs who have CW/QRO, SSB/QRP, PSK, etc. activities and won't copy those activities just to increase our membership numbers. If someone does also operate other modes or QRO, we urge them to join those clubs ALSO and support them as well as supporting the NAQCC.

If you know someone who fits the above description, and they are not already a member, explain to them that they are welcome to join the NAQCC and that it is FREE.

Club President Tom WY3H is working on getting a very nice prize to be given to the member who recruits the most new members. We hope to have full details on that in the next newsletter due out July 26th.

- Speaking of other clubs and their activities, if you catch this newsletter before 0000Z on July 12, you're just in time to join in the fun in the FISTS club's summer sprint. We are proud to work closely with FISTS in supporting CW and we urge you to join in their sprint and send in a report of your activity to them.

- From Club President Tom WY3H - HAM FEST ALERT!

Greetings to all NAQCC members:
Just wanted to let you know that this Sunday, July 13, John, K3WWP; me, WY3H; and son Ethan, KB3QGW (along with other son Ariel -no ticket yet) will be at the North Hills Amateur Radio Club's Ham Fest to be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Northland Public Library, 300 Cumberland Road, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Ham Fest Info:
Talk-in: 147.09
Free Admission
One tailgating space free
Handicapped accessible
Prizes and 50/50 raffles

For more hamfest details and driving directions visit the North Hills ARC Website:http://www.nharc.org/

I (WY3H) will be monitoring 146.520 Simplex. NAQCC members please give us a shout.

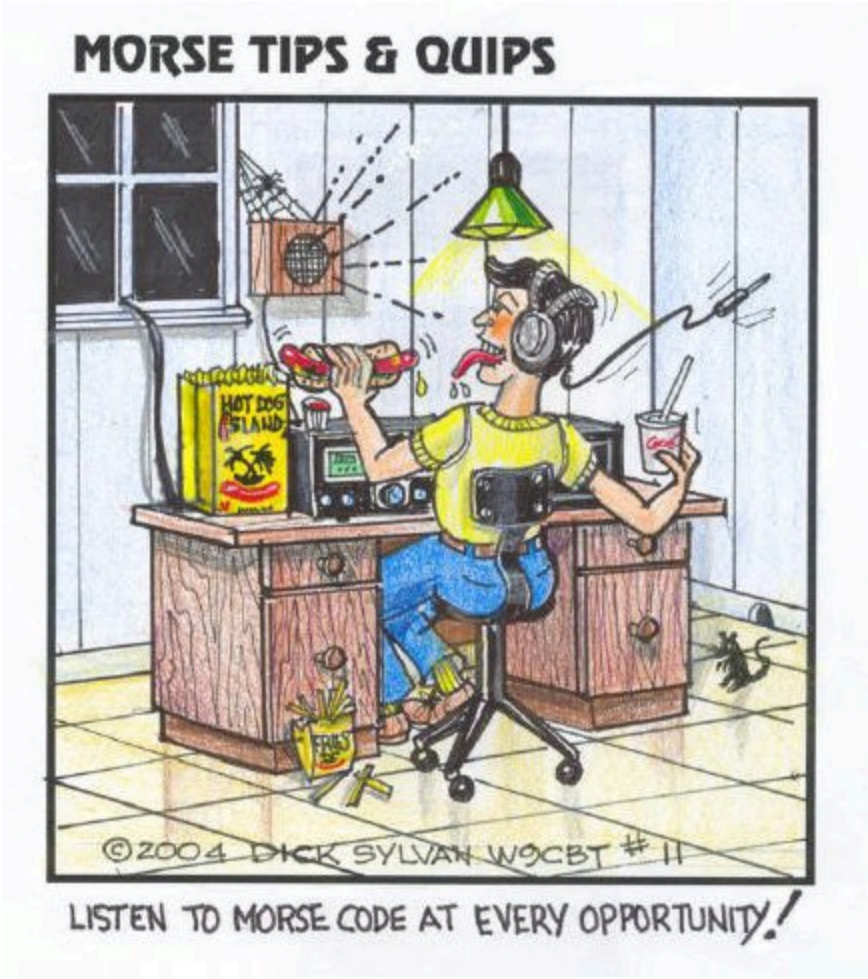
- We had almost no participation in our spring rag chew award this year. Only K3WWP sent in a report. He had 19 rag chews during spring. This is very surprising since many of our members seem to only be interested in rag chewing and don't go in for contests, awards, challenges, etc. I would have thought this award would have been ideal for them, but obviously I was wrong. I guess we'll drop this annual activity since no one is interested in it any longer.

- Another activity that seems to not be drawing any interest is our special event station activity in October. No one at all responed to our request for volunteers to operate the station as of yet. So we'll ask again this newsletter with the following explanation. All you need to do is operate your station as you normally do, but use the call N3A instead of your own call. Actually N3A/(your call area number) to distinguish our different operations. We hope to have ops from all 10 call areas as we did last year. It's something that any one of our 2,400 members can do just as easily as getting out of bed in the morning. So please sign up and support our 4th anniversary special event station. Or if you don't sign up, heck I'll have all the enjoyment myself along with Tom WY3H. I wouldn't mind that as I had a superb time last October with my

share of the operation.

- We are in the final stages of creating email stationery so that you may proudly show that you are a member of the NAQCC when you send a ham radio related email. If you are interested (and I hope you are), just email **NAQCC33@WINDSTREAM.NET** and let us know. Be sure to tell us what email program you use to send your emails (Windows Live Email, Outlook, Outlook Express, etc.) We'll email you the stationery and instructions on how to install and use it. Hopefully the project will be finished by the end of this month. As soon as it is, you will hear from us. Here's a sneak preview of what it looks like at this stage of development.

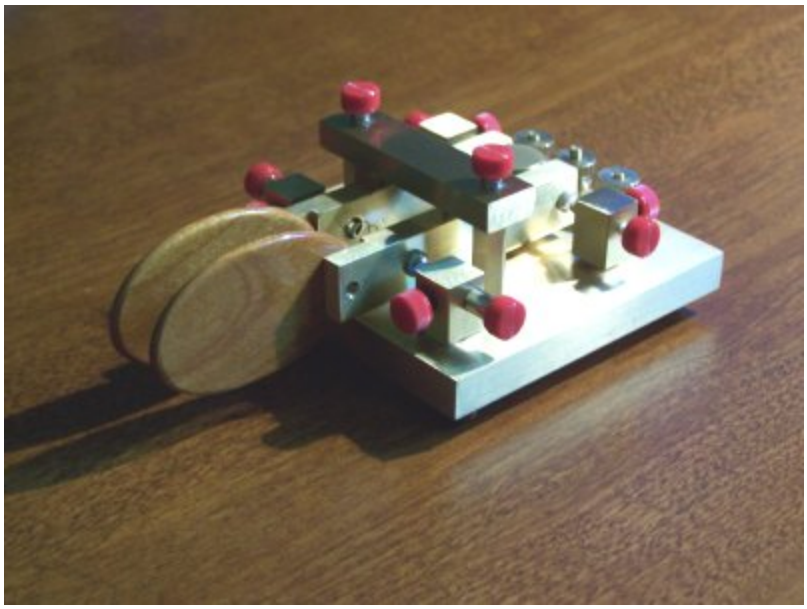
5. CW CARTOON OF THE MONTH: Let's take a comedy break now courtesy of Dick Sylvan W9CBT. Dick has been a long-time QRP/CW operator. One of his many talents is being a cartoon artist, and he is supplying a cartoon each month for the newsletter. The NAQCC is very honored to become the third organization to feature Dick's cartoons in their publications. Dick's cartoons appear monthly in The K9YA Telegraph, an on-line only Ham Radio E-zine and also in RadCom Magazine, the British Ham Radio publication. Dick has also authored a book entitled "Hi Hi - A Collection of Ham Radio Cartoons" available via his web site at http://www.k9ya.org/w9cbt/. A new cartoon will be appearing in each of our even-numbered newsletters.



QRP QRP

6. MEMBER NEWS: Send your news items to our news editor Paul KD2MX at **KD2MX@ARRL.NET**. Tell us what you are doing with your CW/QRP setup, and fill out your story with some photos. That's what we want to see in this section. The only qualification is that it should deal with CW/QRP and not other modes. Your fellow members love to know what you have been up to using this wonderful mode.

- **From Paul N8XMS #675 -** I spent about 10 hours building one of W5JH's "Black Widow" paddles. I used the WB8LZG finger pieces that I won in the NAQCC March challenge. I am really pleased with the results!



- **From Bud W8LSV #1243 -** Thanks for all the news letters. It's been almost 2 years now but yesterday in the mail I received my World Wide 160 Meter DX Contest Certificate from CQ. I won First place for QRP CW for the State of Michigan for 2006 with 3,299 points. I had lots of fun doing it. Best 73s.

- **From Paul KD2MX #1091 -** First I just want to say thanks to everybody who has taken the time to submit a news item. I received Bud's note soon after I had opened the envelope with my certificate for First Place QRP CW for NJ in the 2006 contest. It had taken me a minute to figure out what was going on before I realized that the certificate was for a contest two years past. It was a reminder that despite today's hot weather, the 2008-2009 160M season will be here before we know it. It is one of my favorite times of year.

- **From Karl N3IJR #1770 -** I am proud when I hear neat stories about Morse Code. One of my co-workers told me about a piece he heard on the Jay Leno Show, and I would like to share it with all of you. Maybe some of you already heard this but it bears repeating. You know those high tech guys and gals who can text message so fast, well they really have nothing on us Morse guys and gals. You have to watch this video clip from the Jay Leno show; Jay Leno Clip.

This is really neat stuff! It is so cool to see two seasoned hams go up against the texters. I hope you all enjoy it as much as I did. Long Live CW! 73 es 72 Karl/N3IJR

- **From Steve NU7T #0434 -** Each month three or four members earn for themselves a new NAQCC award. Our awards represent an outstanding achievement; much more than the beautiful certificate reveals.

Challenges are by schedule only. Sprints have strict time limitations. Both require concentrated effort during football season, significant other honey-do list assignments and your children's concerts. This is not so with the award program.

Our award program affords you the opportunity to excel and realize great satisifaction at your own pace, on your own free time without being stressed and pressed. Additionally, as you near your goal, you will experience that great rush hams go through as the culmination is reached.

We have a large variety of awards, each with options available for you to customize them to fit your desires. I exhort each of you to look down our list at: Current Awards

Then look through your log. There may be a good beginning towards the recognition you deserve and will receive when visitors to your shack and our web site exclaim their admiration.

- **From John K3WWP #0002 -** For the first time in my 45 years as as ham, I'm enjoying the 6 meter band. I never had a rig that operated that band until I got the Kenwood TS-480SAT back in April. It took a while to figure out why I was getting RF into several things in my house before I was able to actually operate the band. It just turned out that 6 meters is divided into three segments on the 480, and when Mike KC2EGL and I set it up, we set every segment on all the bands to 5 watts output EXCEPT for one of the 6 meters segments, and that was the one I was using. It was set for 100 watts, and as soon as I finally noticed that and reduced the power to 5 watts, everything worked fine with no RF problems. As of writing this I have about a dozen QSO's and 9 states on 6 meters on my way to a QRP/CW WAS on 6 meters. The states I've worked are MN, PA, MS, OK, TX, WI, CA, KS, and IL. I really enjoy the Magic Band and look forward to a lot of continued excitement working it. Incidentally I'm using my 20M attic dipole and 15M side of house mounted vertical dipole as my 6M antennas.

- **From John K3WWP #0002 -** Mike KC2EGL and I recently built a key junction box for Mike's 6 keys and 2 rigs. Mike is going to write an article for the newsletter about the box and also about the paddle handles he won. I showed you a picture of the paddle handles last newsletter. Now here are a couple pictures of the junction box.

The publication of our next newsletter will be announced via email to all members for whom we have a valid email address unless they specifically have unsubscribed from the email.

Unless otherwise credited, all items are written by K3WWP.

If you came directly to this newsletter, we invite you now to browse the NAQCC Web Site.